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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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Saturday, December 5, 1936
U. S. Department of Agriculture

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "PEANUTS BY THE BILLION." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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The letter from Washington today concerns the peanut crop. Writes our correspondent:

"The peanut-vender should be singing a cheerful song this year. So should the boy who likes to eat peanuts by the peck. For the country's peanut-crop this year is a 'whopper', to put it mildly. It is breaking all records for size. Department-of-Agriculture forecasters estimate the harvest at 1 billion 311 million 560 pounds. Try to imagine a billion pounds of peanuts plus 311 million pounds, and you'll probably be seeing visions of peanut brittle in Christmas stockings and peanut-butter sandwiches in school lunches, and peanut cookies and cakes and all the other peanut possibilities for the family menu. When peanuts are so plentiful, it's a safe guess that they'll also be cheap. So any housewife who appreciates a food bargain will be out to make use of this year's peanut crop.

"Probably you know that peanuts are a southern crop -- grow in our southern States where the weather is mild. The 2 States that are having record peanut harvest this year are Georgia and Alabama, with Virginia following as a close second. As you may know, the peanut is not a true nut. It is really a pea and in the South often goes by the name of 'goober pea'. It belongs to the legume family so is a relative of all the other peas and beans. But the peanut vine behaves differently from other legume plants. When its pods are very young, they begin to point downward on their stalks and bury themselves in the soil. So they ripen underground and are dug up as the familiar peanut.

"Peanuts have long been grown as a food crop in South America, Africa, India and Manchuria, but we didn't appreciate their food value in this country until the Civil War when soldiers discovered their sustaining power, and following the war they became popular the country over, and have grown to be a very important crop commercially. Much of the crop goes to make oil for various uses -- cooking oil, salad oil, oil for preserving sardines, and so on.

One reason that peanuts are such bargains in food and deserve special consideration in low-cost diets is that they are so rich in food value. In other words, they give so much concentrated nourishment for such small cost. They are rich in both oil and protein and an excellent source of vitamin B. Department-of-Agriculture chemists say that a pound of whole peanuts contains nearly a half pound of fat and nearly a fourth pound of protein. Peanuts have other advantages beside food value. They have a characteristic and unusual flavor that is very popular. And they can fit into the meal in one way or another 'from soup to nuts', literally.

"When you consider ways to use peanuts, you probably think of peanut-butter first. More peanuts go for making peanut-butter each year than for any other one use -- about 200 million pounds. Most of this butter is made commercially, but you may be interested to know that you can easily make your own peanut-butter at home. The only equipment necessary is an oven for roasting the peanuts and a meat-grinder for grinding them into butter. Remove both shells and the brown dry skins from the roasted nuts; then put them through the chopper using the finest grinding-plate. You can add salt to the nuts before grinding or to the paste afterward. If the first grinding doesn't make a paste smooth enough for butter, put it through the grinder a second time.

"By the way, many people have an idea that because peanut-butter is so oily, some sort of fat is added to the peanuts in making. This is a mistake. Shelled peanuts contain anywhere from 23 to 50 percent oil, which means plenty for nut butter.

"So much for making peanut-butter. Now for some ideas for using it in everyday menus, as suggested by the Bureau of Home Economics.

"Let's start with the soup course. Did you know that peanut butter makes a delicious cream soup and that it is also delicious added to tomato soup?

"Here is the way to make cream of peanut-butter soup for 5 or 6 people. The ingredients you'll need are: 1 quart of milk.... 2 slices of onion.... 2 tablespoons of flour.... a half cup of peanut butter.... salt and tabasco sauce to taste.... chopped parsley for garnishing. First, use a little of the cold milk to blend with the 2 tablespoons of flour. Then heat the rest of the milk in the double boiler with the onion slices. Stir in the flour-paste until the milk thickens. Then mix peanut butter with a little of the hot thickened milk and add it to the rest in the double boiler. Season with salt and a few drops of tabasco. Remove the onion just before serving, and add finely chopped parsley. This soup, you see, is really a thin white sauce made with peanut butter instead of butter. As we were saying, peanut butter is also good in tomato soup and in onion soup.

"Speaking of onions, another bumper crop this year, onions and peanuts make a happy combination of flavors. Did you ever try scalloped onions with peanut butter? Just make a regular scallop of sliced onions, peanut butter sauce and bread crumbs.

"Peanut-butter omelet is an excellent breakfast and supper dish -- and an easy one. Just add milk, peanut butter and salt to the beaten yolks and then add the stiffly beaten whites. Make just as you would plain omelet.

"If you want variety in your baking-powder biscuits, try substituting peanut-butter for half the fat in the biscuit mixture. You can do the same in your recipe for plain cup-cakes. As for drop cookies, in these you can use peanut butter entirely in place of other fat."

"As for Christmas candy, what could be better than homemade peanut brittle or dates and figs stuffed with peanut filling?"

That concludes our Washington letter for today with ideas for making the most of the peanut crop.

